Supplementary Information for:
Selvanathan, H.P., Hornsey, M. J., Jetten, J., Bourdaniotis, X., Hewett, M. & Manoharan, R.T. (2026). Understanding public responses to counter-protests disrupting social change movements. *advances.in/psychology, 1*, e648056. https://doi.org/10.56296/aip00049

Results without Controlling for Political Orientation

Study 1

We tested whether perceived suppression of free speech mediated the relationship between perceived violence of the pro-China protest and changes in sympathy towards Hong Kong using PROCESS (Hayes, 2018; Model 4) with 10,000 bootstrapped samples. Perceived violence of the pro-China protest was positively associated with perceived suppression of free speech (b = 0.61, 95% CI [0.49, 0.73], p < .001), and perceived suppression of free speech was positively associated with changes in sympathy towards Hong Kong (b = 0.21, 95% CI [0.12, 0.30], p < .001). The indirect association between perceived violence of the pro-China protest and changes in sympathy towards Hong Kong via perceived suppression of free speech was significant, b = 0.13, boot SE = .04, boot 95% CI [0.06, 0.21]). The total association between perceived violence and changes in sympathy was significant (b = 0.33, 95% CI [0.23, 0.43], p < .001), as was the direct association (b = 0.20, 95% CI [0.09, 0.32], p < .001) after accounting for the mediator.

Study 2

We tested whether perceived suppression of pro-reform protesters' free speech mediated the link between perceived violence of the anti-reform protest and changes in sympathy towards the pro-reform protests using PROCESS (Hayes, 2018; Model 4) with 10,000 bootstrapped samples. Perceived violence of the anti-reform protest was positively associated with perceived suppression of free speech (b = 0.66, 95% CI [0.51, 0.82, p < .001),

and perceived suppression of free speech was positively associated with changes in sympathy towards the pro-reform protests (b = 0.23, 95% CI [0.14, 0.33], p < .001). The indirect association between perceived violence of the anti-reform protest and changes in sympathy towards the pro-reform protests via perceived suppression of free speech was significant (b = 0.16, boot SE = 0.04, boot 95% CI [0.08, 0.26]). The total association between perceived violence and changes in sympathy was significant (b = 0.36, 95% CI [0.24, 0.48], p < .001), as was the direct association after accounting for the mediator (b = 0.21, 95% CI [0.07, 0.34], p = .002).

Study 3

A series of two-way between group analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to test the effect of condition on each outcome. There was a significant main effect of counter protest group on perceived suppression of the original protesters' freedom of speech, F(1, 377) = 157.88, p < .001, η_p^2 = .30. The White nationalist group was perceived to suppress the immigrant rights protesters' freedom of speech (M = 5.23, SE = 0.16) more so than the immigrant rights protest was perceived to supress the White nationalist protester's freedom of speech (M = 2.37, SE = 0.16). There was also a significant main effect of counter protest strategy, F(1, 377) = 123.77, p < .001, η_p^2 = .25. A violent counter-protest tactic was perceived to suppress the original protesters' freedom of speech (M = 5.07, SE = 0.16) more so than a non-violent tactic (M = 2.53, SE = 0.16). These main effects were qualified by a significant interaction between counter-protest group and counter-protest strategy, F(1, 377) = 16.00, p < .001, η_p^2 = .04. The use of violence by a White nationalist counter-protest was viewed as a greater suppression of the original protesters' freedom of speech (M = 6.95, SE = 0.23) than the use of violence by an immigrant rights counter-protest (M = 3.18, SE = 0.23), F(1, 377) = 139.03, p < .001, η_p^2 = .27. The non-violent White nationalist counter-protest was also viewed as a greater suppression of the original protesters' freedom of speech (M = 3.51,

SE = 0.23) than the non-violent immigrant rights counter-protest (*M* = 1.55, *SE* = 0.23), but to a lesser degree, $F(1, 377) = 36.20$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$.

There were no significant main effects of counter-protest group, $F(1, 377) = 2.87$, $p = .091$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$, and counter-protest strategy, $F(1, 377) = 0.05$, $p = .829$, $\eta_p^2 < .001$, on sympathy towards the immigrant rights protest. There was also no significant interaction between counter-protest group and counter-protest strategy, $F(1, 377) = 0.79$, $p = 375$, $\eta_p^2 = .002$. Thus, there were no significant differences between the violent White nationalist counter-protest (*M* = 7.43, *SE* = 0.18), violent immigrant rights counter-protest (*M* = 6.96, *SE* = 0.18), non-violent White nationalist counter-protest (*M* = 7.31, *SE* = 0.18) and non-violent immigrant rights counter-protest (*M* = 7.16, *SE* = 0.18) conditions.

There were no significant main effects of counter protest group, $F(1, 377) = 2.53$, $p = .113$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$, and counter-protest strategy, $F(1, 377) = 2.52$, $p = .113$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$, on sympathy towards the White nationalist protest. There was also no significant interaction between counter-protest group and counter-protest strategy, $F(1, 377) = 1.34$, $p = .247$, $\eta_p^2 = .004$. Thus, there were no significant differences between the violent White nationalist counter-protest (*M* = 3.48, *SE* = 0.20), violent immigrant rights counter-protest (*M* = 2.78, *SE* = 0.20), non-violent White nationalist counter-protest (*M* = 3.44, *SE* = 0.21) and non-violent immigrant rights counter-protest (*M* = 3.48, *SE* = 0.21) conditions.

To examine whether there was an indirect effect between counter-protest strategy on sympathy towards the immigrant rights protest via perceived suppression of immigrant rights protesters' free speech, we conducted a mediation analysis using Model 4 of PROCESS (Hayes, 2018) with 10,000 bootstrapped samples using participants in the White nationalist counter-protest condition who saw the immigrant rights protesters framed as the original protest group (*n* = 190). Manipulated strategy of the counter-protest was entered as the predictor (1 = violent, 0 = non-violent), perceived suppression of the original protesters' free

speech as the mediator, sympathy towards the immigrant rights protest as the DV. Counter-protest strategy was positively associated with perceived suppression of free speech (b = 3.45, 95% CI [2.76, 4.14], $p < .001$), and perceived suppression of free speech was positively associated with sympathy towards the immigrant rights protest (b = 0.34, 95% CI [0.24, 0.43], $p < .001$). The indirect effect of counter-protest strategy on sympathy via perceived suppression of free speech was significant (b = 1.17, boot SE = 0.21, boot 95% CI [0.81, 1.64]). The total effect of counter-protest strategy on sympathy was not significant (b = 0.12, 95% CI [-0.39, 0.63], p = .639). The direct effect (b = -1.04, 95% CI [-1.60, -0.49], $p < .001$) was significant after accounting for the mediator, however it was in the opposite direction. This pattern of findings suggests the presence of a potential suppression effect and competing processes. A violent-counter protest may simultaneously be associated with greater sympathy via perceived suppression of free speech but also reduced sympathy via other mechanisms.

Study 4A

An ANOVA was conducted to test the effect of condition on sympathy for the anti-mining protest. Participants in the counter-protest condition (M = 7.28; SE = 0.15) did not significantly differ from those in the control condition (M = 7.02, SE = 0.19), $F(1, 154)$ = 1.09, p = .298.

Study 4B

An ANOVA was conducted to examine the effect of condition (control, non-violent counter-protest, violent counter-protest) on sympathy towards the environmental protest. There was no significant effect of condition on sympathy, $F(2, 265) = 2.58$, p = .078, η_p^2 = .02. However, planned contrasts showed that sympathy towards the environmental protest was significantly higher in the control condition (M = 7.59, SE = 0.15) compared to the non-violent counter-protest condition (M = 7.12, SE = 0.15), p = .027. There was no significant difference in sympathy between the violent counter-protest condition (M = 7.44, SE = 0.16)

and the control condition (p = .495) or between the violent counter-protest condition and the non-violent counter-protest condition (p = .144).

An ANOVA was conducted to test the effect of counter-protest strategy (violent and non-violent counter-protest conditions) on perceived suppression of environmental protesters' free speech. There was a significant effect of condition on perceived suppression of free speech, $F(1, 176) = 290.85$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .623$. The violent counter-protest was perceived as suppressing free speech (M = 6.92, SE = 0.19) more than the non-violent counter-protest (M = 2.63, SE = 0.17).

We used PROCESS (Hayes, 2022; Model 4) to test the indirect effect of counter-protest strategy (0 = non-violent, 1 = violent) on sympathy towards the environmental protest via perceived suppression of free speech. Counter-protest strategy was positively associated with perceived suppression of free speech (b = 4.30, 95% CI [3.80, 4.80], $p < .001$), and perceived suppression of free speech was positively associated with sympathy towards the environmental protest (b = 0.23, 95% CI [0.10, 0.36], $p < .001$). The indirect effect of counter-protest strategy on sympathy via perceived suppression of free speech was significant (b = 0.98, boot SE = 0.33, boot 95% CI [0.37, 1.65]). The total effect of counter-protest strategy on sympathy was not significant (b = 0.32, 95% CI [-0.13, 0.76], p = .164), and the direct effect (b = -0.67, 95% CI [-1.37, 0.04], p = .063) was also not significant after accounting for the mediator.

Results Including Full Sample

In Study 4A, due to the high number of participants who failed the attention check, we also re-ran analyses without excluding these participants. The finding remained the same. Participants in the counter-protest condition (M = 7.26; SE = 0.15) did not significantly differ from those in the control condition (M = 7.25, SE = 0.15), $F(1, 207) < .001$, p = .959.

Exploratory Analyses: Examining Potential Suppressor Effects

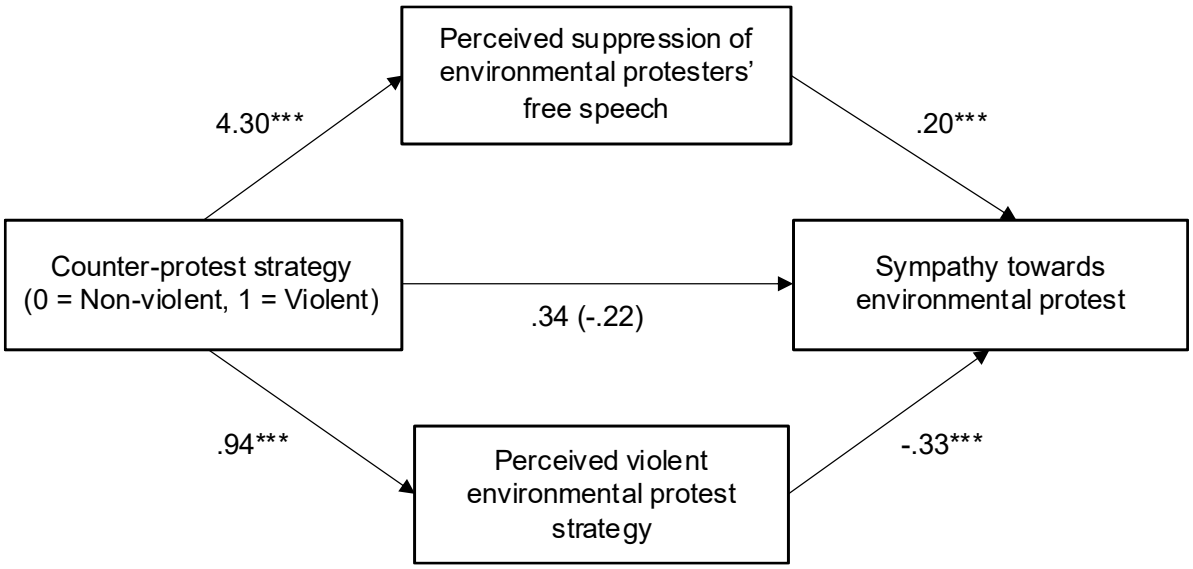
Based on the mediation results reported in Study 4B, exploratory analyses were conducted to investigate potential suppressor effects in the model. Suppressor effects can conceal or obscure significant total or direct effects, even when there are significant indirect effects (Rucker et al., 2011). Hence, in cases where a significant indirect effect occurs with no significant total or direct effects, it is possible a potential suppressor variable may be exerting an opposing indirect effect to the mediator (Rucker et al., 2011). One potential suppressor variable in the above model is perceived violent strategy of the environmental protest. Participants may have viewed the environmental protest as more violent in the violent counter-protest condition relative to the non-violent condition, which could lead to lower sympathy towards the environmental protest.

Before testing perceived violent environmental protest strategy as a potential suppressor in the meditation model, a one-way between-subjects ANCOVA was conducted to assess the effect of condition (control, non-violent counter-protest, violent counter-protest) on perceived violent environmental protest strategy, controlling for political conservatism. Perceptions of the violent strategy of the environmental protest was measured using the same items to measure perceptions of violent strategy of the pro-mining protest ($\alpha = .70$). There was a significance difference in perceived violent environmental protest strategy between conditions, $F(2, 264) = 10.94$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .08$. Specifically, participants in the violent counter-protest condition perceived the environmental protest as significantly more violent ($M = 3.79$, $SE = 0.16$) than those in both the control condition ($M = 2.93$, $SE = 0.15$), $p < .001$, and the non-violent counter-protest condition ($M = 2.84$, $SE = 0.15$), $p < .001$. There was no significant difference between the control and non-violent counter-protest conditions ($p = .709$). These findings suggest that exposure to a violent counter-protest increased the perception that the environmental protest itself is violent.

To examine whether perceived violent environmental strategy protest was a potential suppressor variable, a multiple mediation analysis was conducted using PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018; Model 4). The model tested the indirect effects of counter-protest strategy (0 = non-violent, 1 = violent) on sympathy towards the environmental protest via perceived disruption of free speech and perceived violent environmental protest strategy. As we did in the main analyses reported in the paper, the mediation model also included political conservatism as a covariate. See Figure 1S for the parallel mediation model.

Figure 1S

Parallel mediation model for Study 4B



Note. Unstandardised regression estimates are reported. The total effect is reported in parenthesis. The direct effect is reported outside the parenthesis. *** $p < .001$.

Consistent with findings in the paper, there was a significant indirect effect of counter-protest strategy on sympathy towards the environmental protest via perceived suppression of free speech, $b = 0.87$, $SE = 0.24$, 95% CI [0.37, 1.29]. Consistent with a suppression effect, there was also a significant indirect effect of counter-protest strategy on sympathy towards the environmental protest via perceived violent environmental protest strategy in the reverse direction, $b = -0.31$, $SE = 0.10$, 95% CI [-0.53, -0.14]. Specifically, a violent (versus non-

violent) counter-protest was perceived as more disruptive of the environmental protesters' right to free speech, which in turn increased sympathy towards the environmental protest. At the same time, a violent (versus non-violent) counter-protest also increased perceptions that the environmental protest itself was violent, which reduced sympathy towards the environmental protest. Thus, counter-protest strategy was associated with sympathy through two opposing indirect effect pathways. After accounting for these indirect effects, the direct effect of counter-protest strategy on sympathy toward environmental protest was non-significant, b = -0.22, SE = 0.32, p = .484, 95% CI [-0.84, 0.40].